



## **Testimony of AARP CT in Support of**

**H.B. No. 7152**

**AN ACT ACCELERATING THE DEPLOYMENT OF 5G WIRELESS FACILITIES**

**March 5, 2019**

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 38 million nationwide, and nearly 600,000 members here in Connecticut. AARP supports livable communities for all ages, aging in place initiatives and financial opportunity and resiliency for everyone as they work age and retire. We are before the General Assembly every year on a multitude of bills that support these issues.

AARP supports H.B. 7152, “An Act Accelerating the Deployment of 5G Wireless Facilities,” because the bill would establish a transparent and informed process for overseeing the siting of 5G equipment in Connecticut. Moreover, the newly created oversight body that H.B. 7152 would create to oversee the placement of 5G equipment on state property – the Council on 5G Technology – includes a procedure for gathering input from interested parties. Also, the bill appropriately relies on the Office of Policy and Management, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority and the Siting Council to guide municipalities as they oversee the placement of 5G equipment.

As Connecticut transitions to fifth generation cellular networks (“5G”), carriers will be deploying different hardware from the equipment they now use to deliver wireless signals. Now, wireless carriers rely on large towers that they place far apart. With 5G, they will need to deploy smaller equipment, often on streetlights or utility poles, some estimate at an average of 500 feet apart. The placement of these many small facilities throughout the state, especially in urban areas where the initial roll-out is expected to occur - should happen in a thoughtful manner. AARP supports

well-informed transparent processes that guide the reasonable deployment of these new facilities, especially where public land and property is concerned.

H.B. 7152 provides a well-reasoned blueprint for such a process, appropriately balancing the state's interest in cutting-edge technology with the state's interest in protecting public safety and aesthetics. For example, as described by the bill, the 5G Council would adopt guidelines for, among other things, the "safe placement of personal wireless service facilities [and] the protection of open space land." Connecticut will benefit from the thoughtful and well-considered placement of new wireless facilities, which, often, may be placed on public facilities and public land. It is fitting and appropriate that the state guide the placement of these facilities. The bill creates a process by which the 5G Council will review wireless carriers' requests "for the use of state real properties for the placement, construction, maintenance and operation of personal wireless service facilities and small wireless facilities" and provides a process for affected state agencies to comment on such placement. In light of the substantial value to wireless carriers of being able to place their equipment on public lands and the impact on the public interest of such placement, it is entirely appropriate that the state ensure that it occurs in a manner consistent with the public interest, public aesthetics, and public welfare.

The bill would ensure that the deployment of potentially hundreds of new facilities does not happen haphazardly. For example, the bill requires wireless carriers that submit a request to place facilities on state property to "submit to the council, at the time it submits its first request and every two years thereafter, such wireless carrier's master plan for personal wireless service facilities and small wireless facilities in the state." AARP applauds this well-considered balance of encouraging the deployment of state-of-the-art technology with furthering the public interest.

The bill also directs relevant state agencies (the Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority and the Connecticut Siting Council), to work with municipalities to establish a process for siting small wireless facilities.

5G technology will bring faster wireless service and improved latency, which in turn will enhance not only entertainment (allowing one to download movies within seconds), but also will support advanced applications supporting medicine and other fields that rely on high-speed connections.

But 5G is not yet here and phones need to be able to support the new technology. Some predict that 5G's full benefits aren't expected until American carriers upgrade key central switching equipment, which may not happen until late 2019 or sometime in 2020. H.B. No. 7152 is well-timed and ensures that Connecticut has a process in place to ensure that carriers future deployment of 5G wireless facilities in a way that furthers the public interest. In conclusion, AARP supports H.B. 7152.